



## Journalistic Text Production

### *A Case Study on Revisions of Content and Form*

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# JOURNALISTIC TEXT PRODUCTION: A CASE STUDY ON REVISIONS OF CONTENT AND FORM

## ABSTRACT

- This paper provides insights into journalists' revisions of content and linguistic form when producing newspaper articles.
- By use of keystroke logging, participant observation and retrospective interviews, a multiple case study investigated three professional text producers' practices as they unfolded in their natural setting at the Spanish newspaper, El Mundo.
- Results indicate that journalists' revisions are related to form markedly more often than to content.
- Results suggest two writing phases serving different overall purposes: one in which the journalists produce (more) text for the newspaper article, and one in which they evaluate, and especially, reduce the length of the article.

## EXTENDED SUMMARY

News products provide much of the foundation for what we know about the world we live in. However, we lack empirical knowledge about the process of writing news texts, i.e. knowledge about the choices made by journalists as to *what* to communicate and *how* to communicate it. This paper aims to contribute to filling this research gap by reporting on an observational study of some of the decisions journalists make as regards content and linguistic form when composing news articles (NN 2016). More specifically, the study investigated revisions that were carried out by journalists during text production as these revisions yield insights into the progression of the text and thus contribute to our understanding of how journalists work with the content and linguistic form of a text.

The study was conducted as a qualitative and exploratory multiple case study and investigated three professional text producers' practices as they unfolded in their natural setting at the Business and Finance Section at the Spanish newspaper, El Mundo, in Madrid. The study applied a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, i.e. keystroke logging, participant observation and retrospective interview.

Results indicate that journalists' revisions are related to form markedly more often than to content (approx. three to four times more often). This suggests that the journalists are skilled at generating suitable content that requires no revision. Moreover, the revision type (e.g. addition, omission and substitution) and the effect on the text (content or linguistic form) seem to suggest two writing phases serving different overall purposes; one in which the journalists produce (more) text for the newspaper article in the first phase and one in which they evaluate, and especially, reduce the length of the article in the second phase.

The results contribute to our knowledge about the composing process of news texts and may be used as a point of departure for new studies. As such, the study can help generate hypotheses about how other text producers, both in similar and different contexts, write and revise their texts and how they juggle content and form.